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Continuing reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications: a progress report

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Since 2002, the Department of Public Information has undergone a comprehensive review of its management and operations. As a result, it has adopted a new strategic approach that concentrates on key messages forming part of a coordinated communications strategy. It has acquired new communications tools that seek to make balanced use of the new communications technologies, especially the Internet, while continuing to improve upon its use of the traditional means of communication, including radio and print materials. It has also widened the pool of its communications partners, ranging from public to private and corporate sectors. A new culture of evaluation and performance management has now become an integral part of its activities.

Throughout the second half of 2004 and in early 2005, the Department of Public Information was focused on communicating to the world a process of revitalization and reform of the United Nations. The main elements of this process are a campaign to promote the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, the new vision of collective security for the twenty-first century presented in the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and the observance of the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations.

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 12 of its resolution 59/126 B of 10 December 2004, the General Assembly noted the Secretary-General's proposals and actions to improve the effective and targeted delivery of public information activities, including the restructuring of the Department of Public Information (DPI), in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the Assembly, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information in this regard at its twenty-seventh session. In paragraph 15, the Assembly took note of the reorientation exercise in enhancing the performance and effectiveness of DPI, and also requested the Secretary-General to report on progress achieved in this regard to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session.

2. The General Assembly, in several other paragraphs of the same resolution, called on the Department to provide specific information on a number of its activities to the Committee on Information. In consultation with the Bureau of the Committee, it was decided that the information requested by the Assembly would be grouped into five reports, the most comprehensive of which would be the present one. The remaining reports would address requests for information on specific areas, such as the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres (A/AC.198/2005/3), the modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries (A/AC.198/2005/4), the activities of the United Nations Communications Group (A/AC.198/2005/5) and the United Nations web site (A/AC.198/2005/6).

II. New strategic approach of the Department of Public Information: opportunities and challenges

3. The overall objective of the Secretary-General's reform proposals on public information, contained in his September 2002 report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), was to enhance public information through a broad-based restructuring of DPI. These proposals led to a reorientation of the Department, based on a comprehensive review of its management and operations. The new strategic approach adopted by the Department now seeks to focus on key messages as part of a coordinated communications strategy. Responding to the needs of its global audience, the Department has continued to maintain a balance between the new communications technologies, especially the Internet, and the traditional means of communication, including radio and print materials. At the same time, it has widened the pool of its communications partners, including from private, public and corporate sectors. A central element of its public information activities has been the promotion and refinement of a culture of evaluation and performance management.

A. A question of credibility: responding to unfounded criticism

4. Over the past 12 months, the United Nations has been in the eye of a media storm in many parts of the world. Amid allegations of corruption, mismanagement and a lack of transparency and accountability in some of its activities, its efficiency, effectiveness and relevance have been publicly and persistently challenged. The

nature of these criticisms has varied widely: the Organization's image in the Middle East continues to be buffeted as developments unfolding in Iraq and in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict have prompted controversy with regard to the role of the United Nations; in North America and in parts of Europe, there has been strong criticism of alleged corruption and mismanagement in the oil-for-food programme; and there has been similar concern voiced over charges of sexual exploitation in peacekeeping operations.

5. The Department has faced an unprecedented test in mobilizing resources to engage in this public debate simultaneously on so many fronts. As an initial step, it strengthened its monitoring of media around the world, making use of new technologies and intensified efforts by United Nations information centres, to provide senior officials with press materials and regular analyses. Moreover, the Department strengthened its media outreach capacity, committing dedicated resources to working with other offices to ensure a coordinated and rapid response to misinformation in the media, as well as the formulation of substantive information for United Nations officials to use when speaking to the press on specific issues. In addition, the Department assisted in the drafting and placement of "op-eds" (opinion articles) by senior officials in newspapers in all parts of the world to further project the Organization's perspective on crucial issues.

6. The image of the United Nations in the Middle East region continued to be of particular concern. To this end, a follow-up meeting to the September 2002 workshop on this issue was held in Beirut in May 2004 to implement a coordinated public information strategy in the region aimed at explaining the Organization's role and activities in the various areas of concern in the region. In addition, with financial assistance from the United Nations Foundation, the Department held two media workshops — a week-long session in March 2004 for senior Arab commentators, who were given the opportunity to hear from and debate with senior officials about the Organization's role in the region, and a two-week programme in November-December 2004 for Arab radio and newspaper journalists, who were briefed on the work of the Organization and its various intergovernmental bodies. Moreover, as part of an annual programme, the Department hosted a seven-week training programme for 10 Palestinian media practitioners from October-December 2004. This programme, designed to provide skills training as well as media exposure to young professionals from the occupied Palestinian territories, has brought to United Nations Headquarters some 80 Palestinian media practitioners since it was first mandated by the General Assembly in 1995.

7. The Department undertook proactive outreach efforts aimed at showing the media and the public at large the many ways in which the Organization is responding to global challenges on a daily basis. The relevance and effectiveness of the Organization was clearly demonstrated during the tsunami tragedy in south and south-east Asia in December 2004, when it responded swiftly to coordinate relief efforts and provided a global forum for reaching consensus on longer-term measures. For its part, the Department has committed resources to ensuring regular and timely multimedia coverage of the international humanitarian and recovery efforts in the countries affected by the tsunami. Thanks in part to the efforts of DPI, the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Kobe, Japan, 18-22 January 2005), which took place only three weeks after the tsunami disaster, generated over 400 articles by major newspapers worldwide. Similarly, radio producers and photographers were sent to report on the efforts made by the United Nations system

to resolve the crisis in Darfur and to report on the historic Security Council meeting in Nairobi, as well as other significant events outside Headquarters.

B. Campaigning for United Nations renewal

8. Throughout the second half of 2004 and in early 2005, the Department of Public Information concentrated on drawing the world's attention to the process of revitalization and reform of the United Nations promoted by the Secretary-General. At the centre of the Department's campaign in support of the renewal were preparations for the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly at the commencement of its sixtieth session in September 2005 to review progress in implementing the United Nations Millennium Declaration. Aware of the challenge by the Secretary-General to use the Millennium +5 Summit as an opportunity to agree on bold decisions needed to move the world closer to that shared vision, the Department is developing an integrated communications strategy to link the summit with a series of high-profile events.

9. The first of these events was the launch in December 2004 of the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which outlined more than 100 proposals on reforming the Organization to enable it to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. For this launch, a major campaign was developed in close cooperation with the Secretariat of the High-level Panel and strategic partners, such as the United Nations Foundation, that targeted policy makers as well as the public at large. The campaign aimed to remind world leaders of the need to engage constructively at the United Nations on global threats with a view to taking action at the 2005 Summit and to convince a more general audience that 2005 will be a year of decision, requiring the constructive input of their leaders. Within one week, the Department produced a bound edition of the report, a press kit and a summary overview. The report and related materials were placed on a specially designed web site, *www.un.org/secureworld*. To help shape the news story and respond to many requests, DPI organized briefings of editors or editorial boards on behalf of Panel members, both before and after the launch of the report. These briefings served to stimulate the interest of journalists and news organizations that were not directly reached by such briefings, but who felt they needed to bring themselves up to speed with their competitors. In addition to New York and Washington, D.C., briefings were held in London (with *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, the BBC, *The Financial Times* and *The Economist*), Berlin and Frankfurt (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Berliner Zeitung*, *Tagesspiegel*, *Die Welt*, *Financial Times Deutschland* and *Der Spiegel*) and in Paris (*Le Monde*, *Le Figaro* and *Jeune Afrique*). A commentary on the Panel report written by the Secretary-General was carried by *The Economist*, as well as by more than 30 newspapers worldwide, including the *Los Angeles Times*, *Le Monde*, the *International Herald Tribune*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Al Akhbar*, *El Pais*, *El Mercurio* (Santiago, Chile) and *The Nation* (Bangkok). The Department also arranged media interviews with several Panel members and helped organize a public discussion with several key Panel members at Headquarters, attended by over 400 civil society leaders.

10. In its campaign leading up to the General Assembly high-level review of implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Department will publicize a series of other reports and events in 2005. These include contributing to the January

launch of the Millennium Project report, which sets out a plan for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and designing a campaign for the Secretary-General's report on implementing the Millennium Declaration, to be issued in March 2005, as well as high-level General Assembly events on AIDS and financing for development and the high-level Economic and Social Council session focusing on the Millennium Development Goals. DPI is also working in partnership with its 1,500 associated non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure that civil society voices contribute to the renewal and reform of the Organization. The 58th DPI/NGO Conference will be held the week before the Millennium +5 Summit and will highlight NGO efforts to support both the United Nations and Member States in their common commitments to the Millennium Declaration. The Conference is expected to be the central opportunity for civil society involvement in the Millennium +5 process.

11. Rallying greater support for the Millennium Development Goals, especially at the national level, remains a central focus for DPI. As part of the United Nations system-wide coordination on the Millennium Development Goals campaign, the Department has launched a new Millennium Development Goals logo, using the slogan "Keep the Promise" with the "2015" graphic developed by the Millennium Campaign. The Cyberschoolbus web site now includes a comprehensive overview of the Goals for a younger audience. A number of United Nations information centres also undertook activities to promote better public understanding of the Goals, including public service announcements (Bujumbura, Panama City and Ouagadougou), a theatre competition (Teheran), a cross-country race against poverty (Yaounde) and media training sessions (United Nations Offices in Almaty, Baku and Yerevan).

12. The culmination of the year's coordinated activities will be the observance, in October 2005, of the sixtieth anniversary of the Organization, which will provide an opportunity to remind Member States of their solemn obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, and the public at large of its role in mobilizing support for an organization which was created in its name. To accomplish both objectives, the Department is initiating during 2005 a range of activities aimed at involving Member States and enhancing its relationships with civil society partners and the general public. In keeping with the theme, "UN60: A Time for Renewal", a number of high profile activities and initiatives will be implemented in 2005. In addition to designing the UN60 logo and preparing guidelines for anniversary partners, the Department has begun creating a dedicated database and a calendar of sixtieth anniversary events, including concerts, colloquiums, exhibits and lectures, with partners in all regions of the world.

13. The Department is also planning a number of activities, with the support of the Permanent Mission of Sweden, to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Dag Hammarskjöld and reaffirm his legacy. These include the issuance of the 2005 calendar, illustrated by photographs from DPI archival collections, and quotes from Dag Hammarskjöld, and a "Lectures and Conversations" series, featuring a variety of experts to discuss the legacy of Hammarskjöld in the light of events, trends and crises affecting the United Nations in this century. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library's web site, "Dag Hammarskjöld: The UN Years", is also being updated.

C. Strengthening the culture of evaluation

14. From its inception in 2001 and as first reported in 2002, creating a culture of evaluation has been a cornerstone of the DPI reorientation process. The Department's strategic planning through systematic evaluation has been reinforced through cooperation with the Office of Internal Oversight Services. This collaborative project to evaluate all DPI activities has now entered its third and final year. The systematic review of the impact of public information activities has encouraged managers at all levels to focus on the evaluation of programme outcomes. This emphasis on results has underlined the importance of direct and regular contact with users of public information products, to align the work of the Department more closely with the needs of its target audiences. The process of establishing a culture of evaluation has significantly increased survey activities, which have more than doubled with the introduction of the annual programme impact review (see figure 1). Nearly 10,000 users have had the opportunity to provide their feedback on the usefulness, relevance and quality of a wide range of products, services and activities of the Department. Overall, surveys conducted since 2002 demonstrate that the Department has managed to meet the demands of an average of 80 per cent of its target audiences in terms of usefulness, relevance and quality of DPI products, activities and services (see figure 2). Audience feedback has also helped programme managers identify areas where they need to perform better. For example, based on feedback from users, one of the Department's web sites has since been redesigned to better serve their information needs.

Figure 1

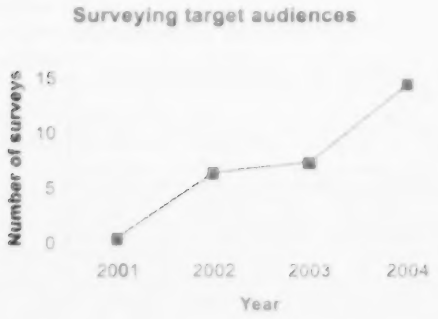
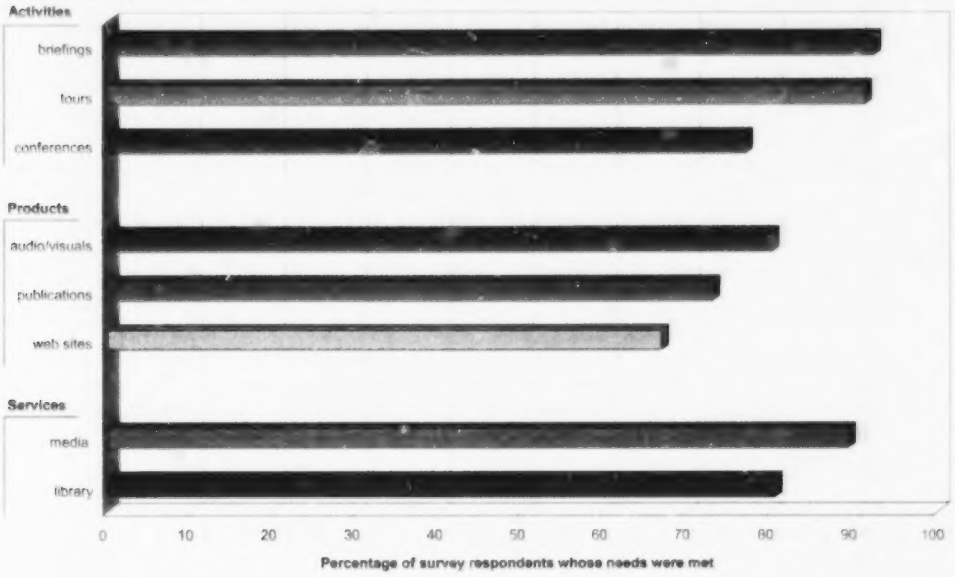


Figure 2

Usefulness, relevance and quality of DPI activities, products and services
(percentage)



15. To the credit of its managers, DPI has succeeded in obtaining feedback on the quality of its products and activities without draining resources from daily programme delivery, testifying to the Department's ability to work creatively within tight budgetary constraints. The increase in systematic assessment is also a direct result of the Department's efforts to ensure extensive training in audience research and evaluation techniques. While two thirds of professional staff at Headquarters have attended one or more of these training workshops, the Department faces a considerable challenge in ensuring adequate training for staff in the field. One avenue that is being explored is to invest in online training modules.

16. Another major challenge for the Department is to monitor and analyse the impact of its communications campaigns and press coverage of United Nations activities. Given budgetary limitations, employing an external company to do so is not a viable option. The Department is therefore building its technical infrastructure and internal capacities through training to enable the staff to conduct systematic media monitoring and analysis. This is a priority for the Department in 2005.

III. Strategic communications services: thematic priorities

17. Guided by the Millennium Declaration of September 2000 and General Assembly resolutions 58/101 B and 59/126 B, the Department of Public Information continued to pay particular attention to such major issues as the eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, HIV/AIDS

epidemic, combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, the needs of the African continent and dialogue among civilizations and cultures of peace.

18. Acting on recommendations of the Committee on Information, the Department took additional measures to further publicize the work and decisions of the General Assembly. As part of its continued emphasis on closer inter-agency collaboration and partnership, the Department was able to obtain a spokesman for the President of the fifty-ninth session of the Assembly through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). DPI itself loaned an information assistant to work full-time with the Spokesman for the President, thus providing back-up support and continuity in the flow of information to the media and within the Secretariat. The Department also provided constant updates to the web site dedicated to providing information on the work of the President of the Assembly. Coverage of the activities of the Assembly and those of its President was also significantly expanded. In addition to transmitting the statements of Heads of State and/or Government to the national radio stations of the least developed countries during the general debate, UN Radio conducted interviews with leaders from several of these countries, including Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Rwanda. The Foreign Ministers of Chad, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Madagascar, Mauritius, Senegal and Tajikistan were also interviewed. The *UN Chronicle* included in-depth coverage of the fiftieth-eighth and fifty-ninth sessions of the Assembly and all its Main Committees, and highlights of the general debate.

19. The client planning process, initiated in 2003 as part of the reform of DPI, was further strengthened. The Strategic Communications Division, which has the primary responsibility for this aspect of the Department's work, continued to consult with and advise client substantive departments on strategies and tactics needed to better promote their major activities and get their key messages out. Over a dozen communications strategies were formally devised and agreed upon for priority issues and events and these strategies were then carried out, with coordination across the Department. In order to generate more media coverage of economic and social development issues in both international and regional media, particularly for new reports issued, a strategy is being implemented with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs to hold press events launching reports in European, Asian or Latin American capitals, rather than only at Headquarters. This initiative has resulted in increased coverage of these reports in both international and regional media.

A. Thematic campaigns

20. As a result of closer coordination with the members of the United Nations system and the host Government, the Department was able to obtain substantial coverage for the 2005 Mauritius international meeting on the sustainable development of small island developing States (10-14 January 2005). Well ahead of the meeting, the Department disseminated a series of press releases/background papers on various aspects of the conference through a well-targeted LISTSERV of more than 1,400 journalists interested in small islands and environmental issues. Moreover, the Department hosted the bilingual official conference web site (*http://www.un.org/smallislands2005/*) and developed a special *UN Works* web site on islanders who made a difference in their communities (*http://www.un.org/works/smallislands/index.asp*). The conference press kit, issued in English and French, was

also distributed widely through the United Nations information centres. In addition, the Department made available staff from its New York and Geneva offices to provide media services to journalists attending the conference as well as radio, television, print and online coverage.

21. The Department, in partnership with the International Telecommunication Union, sought to raise awareness of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (Tunis, 16-18 November 2005). It assisted the outreach activities of the Secretariat of the Working Group on Internet Governance, which will submit its recommendations to the Summit. The activities of the Working Group were covered by *The Economist*, *Le Soleil* and several information and communication technology magazines, including *Computer Weekly*, *Web News*, *IT World*, *Computer Business Review* and *MacWorld*. Publications in the developing world were also targeted. An "op-ed" by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, on the United Nations and Internet governance, distributed by Inter Press Service, was published, among others, by the *Deccan Herald* (India) and *Democracia Digital* (Costa Rica).

22. The promotion of human rights continued to be a priority issue for the Department. The Under-Secretary-General held separate policy and coordination meetings with the High Commissioner for Human Rights in October 2004 and with the Deputy High Commissioner in December 2004. These meetings resulted in broad agreement on joint promotional activities. The observance of 2004 Human Rights Day, a joint effort of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and DPI, coincided with a General Assembly plenary session to mark the end of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). Two panel discussions were arranged, "Freedom from Fear and Want — the Human Rights Year in Review", and "Human Rights Education in the School System — Practical Experiences". An exhibit entitled "Lest We Forget: The Triumph Over Slavery", organized in association with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and a non-governmental organization, was mounted at United Nations Headquarters. The observance of Human Rights Day also coincided with the DPI-sponsored Annual Students Conference on Human Rights. Now organized as a multi-site videoconference programme, participants in the 2004 conference included students from Canada, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Students in China, India, Kenya, Romania, Sweden, the Philippines and the United Kingdom were also able to join through webcast and discussion boards.

23. The Department provided communications support for the July 2004 and January 2005 sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, targeting the local media of those countries that submitted national reports to the Committee. For the July session, press coverage was obtained in newspapers in Spain, Bangladesh and Malta. There was also extensive coverage by wire services in English and Spanish and online news services, including in Africa. For the annual observance of the adoption of the Security Council resolution on women, peace and security, DPI issued a special publication bringing the issues to life by featuring stories of women working for peace. The Secretary-General's report and the Security Council open debate were carried globally, thanks to the Department's radio, television, print and online coverage.

24. In keeping with the General Assembly's designation of Africa as a United Nations development priority, the Department redoubled its efforts to ensure that the activities of the Organization, African Governments and their partners in other countries received maximum exposure in the global media. A comprehensive system-wide information strategy was presented by the Special Adviser on Africa to the members of the United Nations Communications Group at its annual meeting, held in Nairobi in June. The strategy provides for ways to consolidate and strengthen the Organization's information work in support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In July 2004, the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information announced jointly with the Special Adviser on Africa, that the Department's *Africa Recovery* magazine — the centrepiece of the Organization's Africa information programme — would change its name to *Africa Renewal*. The change was intended to reflect the profound transformations now under way in Africa as leaders begin to implement NEPAD. The circulation of *Africa Renewal* and *Afrique Renouveau* magazines, combined, now reaches over 34,000 subscribers. A recent audience survey suggests that each copy is read by an average of eight to nine people, in addition to the subscriber, indicating that the magazines reach over 300,000 people.

25. The promotion of dialogue among civilizations and cultures of peace was another priority issue for the Department. In an effort to examine different manifestations of intolerance and explore ways to promote respect and understanding among peoples, it launched a series of seminars last year entitled "Unlearning intolerance", the first focusing on anti-Semitism and the second on Islamophobia. Designed as an open forum involving civil society organizations, members of the religious community and academia, the series offers the opportunity to discuss how intolerance, wherever it exists and for whatever reasons, can be "unlearned" through education, inclusion and example. More than 600 people attended each seminar, reflecting a very positive response from civil society organizations, foundations and interested individuals. The promotion of the dialogue among civilizations was further reinforced through the activities of United Nations information centres, including a poster competition (United Nations Office in Yerevan) and media round tables (United Nations Offices in Minsk and in Almaty). The United Nations Information Centre Sydney, in conjunction with the advertising company Saatchi and Saatchi, successfully placed advertisements with the theme "tolerance free of charge" in *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

B. United Nations peacekeeping and public information

26. DPI worked on two major fronts this year to address the surge in demands for United Nations peacekeeping: one was to raise awareness about United Nations peacekeeping, particularly the challenges posed by deploying new and expanded missions; the other was to prepare public information components of peacekeeping operations for rapid and effective deployment.

27. A cornerstone of the Department's work in the area of peacekeeping remains its close cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Planning and coordination with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations intensified in 2004 as DPI prepared public information materials and disseminated information on the surge to media and United Nations information centres. DPI worked closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the field missions to plan, staff and

support the public information components of the new and expanded missions, helping identify public information needs, developing budgets, staffing tables and operational concepts and identifying potential staff. DPI also continued to provide backstopping support to the public information components of ongoing peace missions, including by helping to develop communications strategies, arranging coverage of mission activities and developments by United Nations and other media, assisting in the selection of public information personnel and giving advice on public information policy matters.

28. This integrated planning was most visible in the case of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. DPI was closely involved from the very beginning stages of the planning process. This included participation in:

- Pre-mandate planning and informational meetings from February through May
- The assessment mission to Haiti in March 2004
- Headquarters planning meetings from June through November
- Ongoing informal consultations.

29. As a result of this integrated approach, DPI was able to play a major role in designing the information component of the Mission, selecting staff, determining the budget and laying out the blueprint for information activities. DPI worked closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to ensure that the Chief of Information and an information officer — both DPI staff members — were in Haiti in advance of the first day of the mandate. DPI has continued its close coordination with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on these same issues and is in constant contact with the public information office of the Mission itself.

30. The same process has been followed for the planning and set-up of the mission in Côte d'Ivoire. Although the Department did not participate in assessment missions for Burundi, it has been integrated into the Headquarters planning process. This has also been the case for the current political mission in the Sudan and the future peacekeeping mission in that country.

C. United Nations information centres

31. A central focus of the Secretary-General's 2002 reform proposals was improving the effectiveness of the network of United Nations information centres through rationalization and consolidation. As a first step, nine offices in Western Europe were closed and a Regional United Nations Information Centre was established in Brussels on 1 January 2004. A detailed plan on the further rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres was presented at the twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Information (see A/AC.198/2004/3). Discussions at that session and subsequent bilateral meetings with concerned Member States made it clear that there was no consensus on how to proceed with this process. A decision by the General Assembly to remove $2 million from the operational budget of United Nations information centres, which made the work of many information centres more difficult, and a combination of political and economic factors, including a precipitous decline in the value of the dollar, further complicated the rationalization process. Taking into account both the views of Member States and the new reality, the Secretary-General has revised his plan for

the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres, the details of which are included in his report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session (A/AC.198/2005/3).

32. Meanwhile, the Regional United Nations Information Centre in Brussels has begun to make steady progress as a regional information hub for Western Europe. Since moving to its new rent-free premises on 15 July 2004, it has been able to establish and expand its dissemination, media-monitoring and promotional activities through different media and in an increasing number of languages to all 22 countries of the region it covers. Drawing on existing databases from the former United Nations information centres, the regional centre has begun to produce, translate and disseminate press releases and other promotional material to key constituencies in the region. For example, in Portuguese alone, some 1,200 pages were produced and supplied to other United Nations system organizations, such as the United Nations Information Centre Rio de Janeiro and UNDP offices in the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa and beyond. Similarly, German-language materials prepared by the German desk at the Regional United Nations Information Centre are distributed through the United Nations Information Service Vienna and other outlets. It has also successfully launched an electronic newsletter for partners in France, which contributed towards maintaining the visibility of the regional centre in that country. The new Regional United Nations Information Centre web site now covers most West European languages (*www.runic-europe.org*).

33. The Regional United Nations Information Centre in Brussels has also emerged as a venue for major United Nations events, such as launches of key reports, important press briefings and other activities aimed at the media. It has established close working relationships at all levels with the European Commission, the Council and Parliament with a view to designing joint initiatives and information products. At present, plans are being formulated with the Luxembourg presidency of the European Union Council to jointly organize journalist tours to European Union and United Nations projects in developing countries. With the presence of 16 other United Nations agencies and programmes in Brussels, the Regional United Nations Information Centre is also well placed to act as the focal point for joint public outreach activities of the United Nations country team. To this end, the centre has taken the initiative to create a local United Nations Communications Group, modelled after the Communications Group at United Nations Headquarters.

34. The report of the Secretary-General on the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres (A/AC.198/2005/3) provides information on the operational issues relating to the Regional United Nations Information Centre in Brussels.

IV. News services: connecting with the media

35. The News and Media Division has continued to pursue aggressively its central mandate of bringing, on a daily basis, the news of the full range of the Organization's diverse activities to the world through various media, including print, radio, television, photography and the Internet. A principal focus for the Division's activities over the past year has been the strengthening of partnerships with radio and television broadcasters for the delivery of more audio-visual products to a wider range of audience. This has been achieved through a three-part strategy of enhanced

feedback and evaluation with existing partners, outreach to new partners and strengthened coordination with other members of the United Nations family.

A. UN Radio, Television and video: building partnerships

36. The Department has continued to build on its strong existing base of more than 174 partner radio stations in 75 countries. New partnerships, for example, include Radio 10 in Guatemala, Radio Post Phillip in Australia and Communidad 100 in Argentina and three more stations in China — Radio Sichuan, Radio Lianing and Radio Ji Lin. One of the major highlights during the year was the launch of a new radio programme dedicated to Africa. A weekly show targeting Asia has been revitalized and a staff member will travel to India to produce and promote programmes. In another effort to broaden its outreach, the Department has received a grant to hire a United States radio reporter to prepare news and feature stories, "UN Minutes", for distribution to radio stations and networks, primarily in the United States. Bloomberg Radio has expressed a special interest in these short programmes, which are more in tune with an American mainstream audience that listens to music programmes intercut with short news segments. In addition, the Department has secured special promotion of its radio programmes through the International Association of University Presidents, which includes radio on campuses in 700 universities in the United States and worldwide.

37. Close ties with the Department's broadcast partners are crucial to maintaining continued airing of its material. To this end, DPI has continued to inform its broadcast partners about services available and inquire about their needs. *AV eNews*, a unique electronic catalogue featuring the most recent United Nations system-wide audio-visual and media news, saw a 25 per cent increase in subscribers over the course of the year. A recent survey of a sample of its television and radio partners also showed strong satisfaction with the content and timely dissemination of its programmes. Respondents provided suggestions on the precise timing, format and means of distribution, which have helped to inform a more comprehensive survey to be undertaken this year, the results of which will feed directly into the Department's programme planning. Meanwhile, the Department continues to interact with and respond to the needs of the broadcasters. For instance, Radio Beijing has formulated plans to broadcast the United Nations Day concerts through a syndicate of over 20 stations in China, for which UN Radio is offering technical support.

38. Enhanced distribution is key to improved outreach and, along with most of the United Nations agencies active in the audio-visual field, the Department has led efforts to develop new ways for broadcasters to access its products. These efforts have culminated in an important new initiative which will enable the Department and audio-visual producers throughout the United Nations system to distribute video material promptly from Headquarters and from the field to broadcasters. APTN, the world's largest television news agency, with over 500 subscribers, has offered the United Nations 10 minutes of free satellite time, five days a week, to be broadcast twice a day on their Global Video Wire. The Department will put together this daily programming with material shot by its own television and video crews and from footage provided by United Nations system partners. While APTN and other broadcast syndicators regularly feed live coverage supplied by UN Television of significant events at Headquarters, the Organization has never before had the

capacity to reach so many broadcasters every day with footage showing the gamut of United Nations activities.

39. Some 10 new significant television partners have joined the growing number of international television partners airing DPI productions. Over the past year, the Department has also worked to increase the placement of public service announcements on United Nations priority issues. Of particular note was the successful television spot series with Forum Barcelona, whose 13 spots were distributed to 175 television stations worldwide and television spots on the United Nations International Day of Peace from the A&E History channel, and United States cable partners, such as Cable Positive, the United States cable and telecommunications industry's AIDS action programme, have agreed to distribute spots on HIV/AIDS to a wide range of outlets free of charge and on a regular basis. Discussions are also under way with stations on a series of spots commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations.

40. Growing interest in United Nations material by the commercial broadcast industry has also been demonstrated by the Department's consultative role on several film and television projects. A two-part film and television series project on the Organization, its past and present roles and their implications for its future role in the world, is being developed by an independent French producer. A collaboration is also in progress with Scholastic, a major United States educational publishing and media entity with interest in international projects. A documentary on the founding of the United Nations has been undertaken as an international co-production, and with DPI assistance, Beijing television has undertaken a unique series of films on United Nations Goodwill Ambassadors and Ambassadors of Peace.

41. Active promotion of the Department's products is another vital element to successful outreach and its efforts in this regard are bearing fruit. The Department, through its participation in the MIPTV, the leading annual international television programming market, was also able to facilitate access by international broadcasters to recent productions, footage and photo services available with United Nations system organizations. This has resulted in more co-productions, including: *Genesis*, co-produced by the United Nations Environment Programme and Teleimages (France); *Staying Alive*, co-produced by the World Bank and MTV; and an upcoming co-production between the Department and al Jazeera; as well as Harmony Gold's special animated UN60 television spot.

B. Print products

42. Confirming the continued relevance of print products, the Department has issued a new, revised edition of *Basic Facts About the United Nations*. This invaluable book provides a comprehensive yet concise overview of the multifarious activities of the United Nations system, including its work in the political, economic, social and humanitarian spheres, its continuing advancement of human rights and international law, and its successes in the area of decolonization. This completely updated, internet-friendly edition, provides a bird's eye view of how the far-flung members of the United Nations system work together in support of the progress and well-being of life on our planet.

C. United Nations web site

43. The United Nations web site, which continues to be visited heavily by users from all over the world, remains the primary source of information about the Organization and its activities. The *UN News Centre* web site, a portal that provides easy access to the latest news and related resources on the work of the United Nations system for an ever-growing worldwide audience, has continued to grow. The *News Centre*'s effectiveness as a source of news was evidenced by its expanding "link popularity" as more and more external sites, including major media outlets, government agencies and NGOs created direct links to its homepage and thematic segments, or featured its news stories on their pages. For instance, within days of the launch of the *UN News Centre*'s special page on the tsunami disaster, links to it appeared on a variety of web sites, from *The Guardian* newspaper (United Kingdom) to *AcademicInfo.net* and the Science and Development Network (*ScieDev.net*).

44. The expanding reach of the Department's news services on the Web was also shown by the increase in the number of subscribers to the e-mail news service, which by December 2004 exceeded 33,500 for English and French combined, a 50 per cent increase over the previous year. The success of the *UN News Centre*'s e-mail alerts, coupled with similar services for the *UN Webcast* and for *UN Photos*, has necessitated a re-evaluation of the technical requirements for this service in regard to the underlying infrastructural capacity required to handle the volume of outgoing e-mail. As a consequence, the extension of the e-mail news alert system to all languages on the *UN News Centre* has been postponed until later in 2005.

45. Detailed information on the United Nations web site is included in the Secretary-General's report on that subject, submitted for consideration by the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session (A/AC.198/2005/5).

V. Outreach services: strengthening civil society partnerships

46. At Headquarters and in the field, activities organized by the Department are increasingly tied to partnerships with civil society, as well as with the United Nations system. The Department has been working with additional vigour to take United Nations messages and resources to civil society, in particular by building partnerships with NGOs, educators, students and representatives of the media and private sector, in an increasingly integrated fashion, using a variety of both established and innovative channels. In a range of areas, outreach has been enhanced by electronic communications via the Internet and virtual meetings with remote partners through live webcasts and videoconferences.

A. Outreach to civil society and non-governmental organizations

47. The Non-Governmental Organization Section of the Department, which works with over 1,500 associated NGOs, continues to build partnerships that strengthen the Organization's ties with civil society, to professionalize and enhance NGO interaction with the United Nations and to provide opportunities for NGO networking in support of the work of the Organization. In addition to an increasingly sophisticated information programme featuring weekly NGO briefings,

communications workshops and a Resource Centre, the Annual DPI/NGO Conference is now widely recognized as the premier NGO event at Headquarters each year, anticipated by NGOs around the world.

48. In 2004, the Annual NGO Conference, entitled "Millennium Development Goals: Civil Society Takes Action" (8-10 September 2004) focused on the Organization's effort to increase partnerships with civil society in support of the Millennium Development Goals. The Conference was attended by 1,800 NGO representatives from 555 organizations based in 66 countries. The DPI/NGO organizers of the Conference took into account the reforms that are under way to enhance the participation of civil society partners, in keeping with the recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. Emphasizing NGO feedback on the Millennium Development Goals campaigns, the Conference featured for the first time a plenary "public hearing" on the final day of the meeting, designed to transmit concerns and recommendations to United Nations and government officials. The Conference was accessible through an interactive web site that received 1,562 visits (an increase of 200 per cent from 2003). In addition, United Nations information centres organized parallel meetings, seminars and conferences inspired by the DPI/NGO Conference theme. Such meetings took place at information centres in Tehran, Dakar, Asuncion, Moscow, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago, Chile, and at Rutgers University in the United States. The result of this outreach was reflected by the extensive media coverage of the three-day event: over 150 press items appeared in all media, representing a 170 per cent increase over the previous conference.

B. Educational outreach

49. The Educational Outreach Section, through innovative public and private partnerships, has strengthened the connections between DPI and educators, students and the public. The Global Teaching and Learning project, for example, developed a Peace Bell initiative co-sponsored with European Schoolnet (a consortium of 26 ministries of education in the European Union) and the Earth Society Foundation, where hundreds of schools all over Europe participated in activities that focused on peace education, and a Youth Visioning for Island Living art contest, co-sponsored by UNESCO that gave children and youth living on small islands the opportunity to illustrate their vision for the future of their islands. The UN Works programme also continued to leverage its media partnerships to create outreach that focused on the Organization's impact on the lives of ordinary people. During the Barcelona Forum's International Youth Festival in August 2004, an episode of the Showtime television series *What's Going On?*, hosted by the actress Meg Ryan, generated discussion by an audience of hundreds of young people about how they could help break cycles of violence and be agents of change in their own communities. The 10-part series is proving an invaluable resource for educators and NGOs involved in public outreach campaigns on key issues. Another media outreach partnership with Discovery and UNESCO highlights cultural diversity and endangered languages in 20 television spots broadcast around the world.

50. The field of journalism remains a critical area for building partnerships for the Organization. The Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists' Fellowship Programme (formerly the DPI Training Programme for Broadcasters and Journalists from

Developing Countries) continues to address the needs of journalists from developing countries. By providing comprehensive knowledge about the work and activities of the United Nations along with an opportunity to cover the activities of the General Assembly, the programme has helped to create long-term, informed interest in the United Nations among those participating in the programme. Since the programme's inception in 1981, more than 350 journalists from 152 countries have participated.

51. Another established area of outreach, the guided tour operation, continued its ongoing collaboration with NGOs and the private sector. In 2004, the Department reached an agreement with a clothing company on the donation of uniforms for the tour guides that enabled it to enhance the public image of this dynamic and highly visible group of staff. Visitor attendance to guided tours also continued to increase in 2004, reflecting more visiting school groups as well as an overall growth in the tourism industry in New York City. While 323,000 visitors took a guided tour in 2003, the number increased to 360,000, or by 11.4 per cent, in 2004. Meanwhile, complementing the guided tours, the Department's Group Programmes Unit continued to organize a full calendar of briefing programmes for visitors. In 2004, it registered an increase of 13.8 per cent in groups receiving in-house briefings (from 376 to 428) with an increase of 17.4 per cent in participants reached (from 27,641 to 32,442).

52. Special programmes organized by the Department are often the result of partnerships with civil society, as well as with the United Nations system. The official observance of World AIDS Day in December 2004 was again co-sponsored by the Department, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the African Services Committee, with the assistance and support of several NGOs, foundations and private companies. For the second year, this event has been held outside United Nations Headquarters at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City and has been open to the public. Thanks to the public venue and the extended outreach afforded by its co-sponsors, the event received broad media coverage and drew nearly four times as large an audience as attended past World AIDS Day observances held at Headquarters. The International Day of Peace is now being observed on 21 September through an expanded videoconference programme, which brings together non-governmental representatives and students from some 40 countries with young people at peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Sierra Leone. Similarly, the student observance of World Environment Day in 2004 was organized as a multi-site videoconference programme with participants in Australia, Croatia, Greece, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States of America.

VI. Library services: implementing knowledge services

53. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library, through the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries, is actively working with other libraries of the Organization to review United Nations library activities and produce timely, concrete results. The result of this collaboration, a report describing new strategic directions for United Nations libraries, has been submitted to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session (A/AC.198/2005/4) for its consideration. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library also hosted a meeting of United Nations system libraries, where participants agreed to collaborate on the development of a central gateway to all United Nations system

library resources to replace the United Nations System Shared Cataloguing and Public Access System.

54. The Library has also initiated an internal reorganization of its services as a first step in reviewing and streamlining its technical work and to support the reorientation of its activities to foster knowledge management activities. Within the Library, a new section, Knowledge Sharing Services, has been created. This section will provide internal information management consulting services to Secretariat offices and permanent missions to help their staff make better use of information management tools and methods.

55. The Library has continued in its operational programme to provide access to United Nations official documents to the Secretariat and Member States, in both hard copy and electronic form, and through a rapid reference service that identifies official documents and assists in their effective use. The Library continued its digitization efforts to enlarge the range of documents in the Official Documents System. This is a step forward in ensuring that the system becomes a more complete repository of United Nations documentation. Although the purchase of hard copies of books and periodicals has diminished owing to budget constraints, the Library continues to maintain a multilingual collection, including publications on peace and security and development-related issues. It also facilitates access to multilingual information sources on the Internet. The Library has continued its popular series of training programmes in the use of United Nations information resources, extending the reach and impact of these programmes through the organization of a regional training workshop for African depository libraries in Addis Ababa in December 2004.

VII. Conclusions

56. The reorientation of DPI, launched in 2002 with the reform proposals of the Secretary-General, is now complete. The Department has implemented those aspects of the comprehensive review of its work which are within the authority of the Secretary-General and are based on existing General Assembly resolutions and guidance provided by the Committee on Information. The future reports of the Secretary-General on questions relating to public information, which will focus on the overall activities of the Department in the priority areas set by the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, will therefore be renamed to reflect this.

57. The sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations this year — a time of reflection and renewal — presents DPI with an excellent opportunity to tell the United Nations story in a more dynamic way to more people around the world than ever before. This is a time not only to tell our story, it is also a time to better equip the Organization for today's challenges and to gain public support for its vital work. It is a time to reinforce the relevance of the United Nations in today's world.

58. As former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld said in his 1959 speech entitled "Do we need the United Nations?": "We need the Organization ... as a foundation and a framework for arduous and time-consuming attempts to find forms in which an extranational — or perhaps even supranational — influence may be brought to bear in the prevention of future conflicts." His wise words remain true today.

59. The Department of Public Information is well prepared to take on the challenge of telling the story of a renewed and revitalized United Nations. To do this effectively, it needs the support of Member States and, in particular, the Committee on Information, its partner in this vital task.